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THE INFLUENCE OF THE RISE OF THE OTTOMAN TURKS UPON THE ROUTES OF ORIENTAL TRADE

BY

ALBERT H. LYBYER

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VI. THE INFLUENCE OF THE RISE OF THE OTTOMAN TURKS UPON THE ROUTES OF ORIENTAL TRADE.

By ALBERT H. LYBYER,
Professor in the University of Illinois.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE RISE OF THE OTTOMAN TURKS UPON THE ROUTES OF ORIENTAL TRADE.

By ALBERT H. LYBYER.

A generally prevalent view is expressed in the following three quotations put into print within the last 10 years in well-received books by reputable authors:

> The old trade routes between Asia and Europe were effectually and permanently blocked by the Turkish conquests. . . . This is the explanation of that eager search for new routes which lay at the back of so many voyages of discovery in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.
>
> The search for new routes to India that led Columbus to the discovery of the New World was caused by the advance westward of the Ottoman Turks and their interference with the old paths of commerce in the east.
>
> The closing of the trade routes by the advance of the Ottoman Turks led traders to endeavor to find new channels and issued in the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope and the discovery of America.

A pamphlet printed privately within a year or two states that the Turks built, as it were, a wall across the old trade routes, and absolutely forced the western Europeans to seek other paths to the lands of silk and spices.

All of these statements express a firm belief that the closing or the serious obstruction by the Ottoman Turks of the routes of oriental trade was the principal cause of the great maritime discoveries at the beginning of the modern age. It follows logically that the Turks, albeit unwittingly and negatively, belong among the greatest benefactors of mankind. But is this belief true? I formerly accepted it upon authority, but three or four years ago I noticed that it involves an anachronism. Obviously the Turks could not have caused the discoveries by obstructing the trade routes unless their obstruction antedated the discoveries. But the Turks had nothing to do with the two most important trade routes until they took Syria and Egypt in the winter of 1516 and 1517, while the greatest of the discoveries were made in 1487, 1492, and 1498, from 18 to 30 years before. The doubts raised by this serious anachronism have been justified by investigation. The Turks must be dethroned from their place beside Columbus.

The idea before us may be separated into simpler elements, which may be stated thus: The routes of oriental trade were closed (or permanently obstructed) before the year 1498; the closing of these

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routes caused (or strongly influenced) the great discoveries; the Turks closed (or were important agents in closing) the trade routes; therefore the Turks by closing the trade routes caused (or had a powerful influence upon) the great discoveries. Now, this chain of propositions hangs upon the first; if the routes of oriental trade were not closed (or permanently obstructed) before the year 1498, then the whole idea falls to pieces; the great discoveries were otherwise caused and the influence of the Turks, at least as far as closing the trade routes is concerned, is eliminated.

Now, it is very easy to show that the routes of oriental trade were neither closed nor permanently obstructed before or during the period of the great discoveries. Certain wares were produced only in the east. To reach the west they must pass along the trade routes of the Levant. If these routes had been closed the wares could not have come. But pepper, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, mace, nutmeg, rhubarb, and the like, never ceased to be obtainable in western Europe from the Roman times to the present. The trade routes, then, were never permanently closed. But perhaps they were closed at times, or permanently obstructed, so that spices and other products of the east became very difficult to get in western Europe. What would be the evidence of such a permanent obstruction? Obviously, a permanent elevation of prices. If in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the advance of the Ottoman Turks or any other cause progressively obstructed oriental trade, the west would learn of it quite promptly by a progressive rise in the prices of oriental goods.

The extensive researches of Prof. Thorold Rogers and the Vicomte d'Avénel have put us in possession of much information about prices in England and France from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries.[1] The averages of the items found for each 10 years by Rogers, and for each 25 years by d'Avénel, give a very fair idea of the general fluctuations of prices. Now, what do these show as to the prices of pepper between the close of the Crusades and 1500, and particularly between 1453 and 1498, the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, and the arrival of Gama at Calicut? In England the price of a dozen pounds of pepper averaged 15s. 7d. in the fourteenth century, and 15s. 8d. in the fifteenth century. From 1451 to 1500 the average price was 15 shillings. From 1431 to 1480 the average was only 12s. 9d. It rose to 17s. between 1481 and 1490, but fell again to 13s. from 1491 to 1495.[2] There was then, on the whole, an actual decline in the price of pepper in England during the incubation of the great discoveries. In France the average price for a kilogram of pepper, as reduced to modern money by d'Avénel, was in the thirteenth century

[1] J. E. Thorold Rogers, History of Agriculture and Prices in England, 1259 to 1793, Oxford, 1866–1902; Vicomte Georges d'Avénel, Histoire Economique de la Propriété, des Salaires, des Denrées, et de tous les Prix en Général, 1200–1800, Paris, 1894–1912.

[2] Rogers, op. cit., III, 518–543; IV, 680–691.

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6 fr., in the fourteenth century 11.12 fr., and in the fifteenth century only 4.17 fr. From 1450 to 1475 the price was 4.70 fr. and from 1475 to 1500 it was 4 fr.[1] Thus, in France also the price of pepper declined at the time of the great discoveries. Prices of other spices and of home-grown commodities fluctuated in the two countries quite similarly to those of pepper. It is therefore clear that there was no permanent elevation in the prices of oriental products, and therefore there could have been no serious obstruction of the trade routes before the year 1500.

More direct evidence can be found than that of the price of pepper in England and France. The Venetian diarists, Marino Sanuto the Younger and Priuli, who recorded the noteworthy events which came to their knowledge between 1496 and 1533, show that although succession disturbances of the Mameluke throne and the plague caused fluctuations of quantity, the old flow of oriental wares through Syria and Egypt was maintained unbroken down to 1502.[2] In that year a new thing happened. The galleys from Beirut and Alexandria brought very few spices to Venice. In 1504 they brought none at all.[3] The southern trade routes of the Levant had been emptied by the purchases of the Portuguese in India. Beginning with 1508, the Portuguese sent fleets to blockade the mouths of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. This seems to have been the first deliberate attempt on the part of anyone to stop permanently the passage of wares along any of the routes of oriental trade. It was not entirely successful. The Venetian galleys which continued to sail to the Levant usually found some spices. But the old certainty was gone, and the prices, low at Lisbon, were high at Beirut and Alexandria.[4] The total quantity of spices which came by the old routes from the east to Europe was greatly reduced. Venice sent fewer ships to the Levant and thought it imprudent to build new galleys for the trade.[5]

This was the situation when Selim I overthrew the Mameluke Sultans in 1516 and 1517. Instead of blocking the southern routes further, he took up the situation exactly where the Mamelukes had left it. He renewed the old treaties with Venice and the west, and took over the intention to crush the Portuguese naval power in the Indian Ocean by a fleet sent down the Red Sea.[6] Except for the

[1] d'Avénel, op. cit., IV, 482–486, 502–506, 598.

[2] Marino Sanuto, Diarii, 1496–1533, Venice, 1879–1903; Rinaldo Fulin, Diarii e diaristi veneziani, 1881, 155 ff. (del Diarii di Girolamo Priuli, 1494–1512).

[3] Fulin, op. cit., 165, 173, 175.

[4] Fulin, op. cit., 160, 164 ff.

[5] Marino Sanuto, op. cit., XXIV (1517 A. D.), cols. 22–36, passim.

[6] J. W. Zinkeisen, Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches in Europa, Gotha, 1840–1863, de' Venetiani e che nel principio del nuovo imperio procurava d'accrescere i traffichi in quella provincia per particolara utile e commodo di quei sudditi e per interesse dell'entrate publiche.")

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beginning of French participation in the Mediterranean trade,[1] there was no marked change from this policy down to the time of Sanuto's death.

It has been shown that the main or southern routes of oriental trade through the Levant were never closed before the great discoveries, and that the Turks, after conquering Egypt and Syria, made no effort to close them. The main contention is established, then. The Turks did not cause the great discoveries by blocking the routes of oriental trade.

It is desirable to examine some lesser possibilities. Perhaps the acquisition by the Turks of the northern routes stimulated the great explorations, through causing fear that the Turks would some day control and close all the routes, and through diverting the energies of trading powers from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. As for the first supposition, it lacks both probability and evidence. The Turks did not fight the Mamelukes before the war of 1485 to 1491, and then they were soundly beaten. Even in 1516 the outcome of the impending second war was believed to be uncertain. How, then, could westerners have expected that the Turks would one day close all the trade routes? Nor can I find the least evidence of such an expectation. The second supposition, that the Turks diverted the energies of Mediterranean trading powers so that they set out to seek new routes to India, is easily seen to be untenable. The governments of none of these, Venice, Genoa, Aragon, or Florence, had any part in the great discoveries. That was the work of the Atlantic powers, Portugal and Castile. Nor were the well-to-do citizens of the Mediterranean States more active. In 1291, or thereabouts, it is true, certain Genoese went out at the Straits of Gibraltar to seek a new way to the East Indies.[2] But this was before there were any Ottoman Turks. No such expedition went forth from any Mediterranean port after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, of Trebizond in 1461, or of Kaffa in 1475. It becomes then impossible to discern any influence of the Turks through fear that they would close the oriental trade routes, or through the diversion by them of the large activities of Mediterranean cities.

One further line of possible influence of the Turks upon the great discoveries may be discussed. Christopher Columbus and John Cabot were Genoese by place of birth. Had not the northern regions of the Levant trade been reduced by the Turks, these men might have spent their lives in that trade, and never have become discoverers. But this is mere speculation. I believe that neither their own words nor those of their contemporary and later biographers express any

[1] Marino Sanuto, op. cit., LVII, cols. 267, 436, 503; LVIII, col. 86, etc.

[2] Beazley, Introduction to Azurara's Discovery and Conquest of Guinea, Hakluyt Series, 1899, pp. lxi ff.

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consciousness of connection between their enterprises and the rise of the Turks. Columbus seems to have found his inspiration in Portugal and Cabot in Arabia. The same documents, I may say, fail also to reveal any thought in the minds of these men that the old trade routes were or were likely to become closed or seriously hindered. Similar things may be said, by the way, of the documents that deal with Prince Henry the Navigator, of the histories of Turkey, and of Venetian writings and history, so far as I have been able to examine them.[1]

It does not belong to this discussion to determine the true causes of the great discoveries, after the influence of the Turks has been eliminated. The intellect and enterprise of Renaissance Europe were adequate to the project and its execution. There is a negative bearing upon the argument, however, in the fact that Mr. Payne seeks to eliminate all effort to find a new route to the East Indies from the motives of Henry of Portugal, while M. Vignaud tries to do the same for Christopher Columbus.[2] M. Vignaud would in fact postpone the date when even the Portuguese thought of the eastern spice trade until the report of Covilham's journey to the east reached King John II, about the year 1490. In any case, two or three other motives, related to religion, crusading, conquest, and adventure, probably outweighed the seeking of spices in the minds of the great explorers and their royal supporters.

How did the legend of the great influence of the Turks upon the maritime discoveries originate? I have not been able to trace it back of Thorold Rogers, but does it not bear the marks of being a survival of the catastrophic theory in that particular phase which makes the fall of Constantinople the determining event of modern history? Deprived some time ago of the distinction of causing the Italian Renaissance and the German Reformation, this theory has maintained a while longer its hold upon the great discoveries and the desolation of the Levant. It must certainly give up the great discoveries. I think it must also surrender the desolation of the Levant, for the decay of the regions through which the old trade routes passed was probably caused less by the presence of the Turks than by the absence of trade, inevitably attracted away by the superior advantages of the cape route.[3] The possibility of climatic change also deserves consideration.

[1] Examination was made, for example, of Azurara's Discovery and Conquest of Guinea, the histories of commerce by Depping, Cibrario, and Heyd, histories of Venice by Molmenti and Brown, and histories of Turkey by Zinkeisen, La Joncquière, and Jorga.

[2] E. J. Payne, The Age of Discovery, in Cambridge Modern History, I, 12; Henry Vignaud, Histoire critique de la Grande Entreprise de Christophe Colomb, Paris, 1911, p. 213.

[3] Wilhelm Heyd, Histoire du Commerce du Levant au Moyen Age, Leipzig, 1885, II, 547.

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Thorold Rogers appears to reveal his relation to the catastrophic theory when he asserts that "the fall of Constantinople beyond doubt stimulated research into the unknown oceans of the west and south." He affirms that before the Portuguese discoveries the Turks "appear to have blocked every passage but one," and that Selim I, by his conquest of Egypt, proceeded to "block the only remaining road."[1] Most of these matters have been sufficiently dealt with. Prof. Rogers does not appear to have sought proof of his assertions outside of his own field of work. Within this, however, he thinks he has found confirmation of them in the rise of the prices of eastern wares in England for the decade 1451–1460 and the two decades 1521–1540. Aside from the obvious consideration that many elements enter into price fluctuations, such as weather conditions in the country of production, war and peace along the road and in the country of consumption, piracy and extortion, and monopolies and combinations, it would seem that Thorold Rogers has not considered his own figures with sufficient thoroughness. It is true that the price of pepper rose in England from 9s. 5d. per dozen pounds between 1441 and 1450 to 13s. between 1451 and 1460. But it is also true that the former price was the lowest of all the 10-year averages, and that the latter price is well below the average for the fifteenth or any other century until much later. Again, the Wars of the Roses began in England in 1455. It is true also that 12 pounds of pepper averaged in England 16s. 2d. between 1501 and 1520, and 23s. 2d. between 1521 and 1540. But why did Prof. Rogers not observe that this was only part of the general rise of prices which is evident both in England and in France in the sixteenth century and which was almost certainly caused by the addition to the European stock of gold and silver from the Americas? Compare, for example, the price of pepper with that of wheat. For the first four 20-year periods of the sixteenth century the price, by Rogers's own tables, of a dozen pounds of pepper (pence being neglected) was 16, 23, 26, and 39 shillings; the price of a quarter of wheat was 6, 7½, 13, and 15 shillings. Pepper and wheat each rose in the fourth 10 years to about two and one-half times the price in the first 20 years. Surely Prof. Rogers would not have affirmed that the Turks raised the price of wheat in England. In the light of the whole scheme of prices it is not possible to affirm that the fall of Constantinople and the Turkish conquest of Egypt had any appreciable permanent effect upon the prices of oriental wares.

Thorold Rogers is led by this last error into several others. Being partly conscious of the anachronism of his catastrophic view, he strove to explain how the Turks could have raised the price of pepper by conquering Egypt 19 years after the cape had been turned. He

[1] Rogers, op. cit., IV, 653–657.

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concludes that the growth of Portuguese trade with the east was slow; that most of the oriental trade continued to come through Egypt; and that the Turks so burdened this trade with new exactions that the price of oriental wares was raised in the west. Truly a stupendous edifice of false fact erected by erroneous reasoning. It was shown above that the Turks put no new burdens on the oriental trade, and that after 1500 only a greatly reduced and uncertain part of the eastern wares came through Egypt and Syria. As for the rate of growth of the Portuguese trade, Gama took out 4 ships in 1497; Cabral, 13 in 1500; Nova, 4 in 1501 or 1502; Gama, 20 in 1502; Albuquerque, 9 in 1503; and after that from 12 to 15 Portuguese ships went every year.[1] Perhaps one-third were lost, while others remained awhile to fight and explore, but the one-half or thereabouts which returned sufficed to supply western Europe with spices more abundantly than ever before. As for a last statement from Thorold Rogers to the effect that "the commercial decline of Venice, Genoa, Florence, and of the free German cities near the sources of the Danube and the Rhine, begins with the conquest of Egypt by the Turks," it needs but one correction. This may be made by striking out the words "the conquest of Egypt by the Turks" and substituting these: "The turning of the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese."

[1] J. Briggs, History of the Rise of the Mohammedan Power in India, London, 1829, IV, 501 ff. (from an epitome of Faria-e-Souza).

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The Ottoman Turks and the Routes of Oriental Trade

WITHIN a period of a little more than two hundred years, from the close of the thirteenth century to the second decade of the sixteenth, the rising power of the Ottoman Turks extended the area of its political control until its holdings stretched north and south across the Levant from the Russian steppes to the Sudanese desert. The Turkish lands thus came to intercept all the great routes which in ancient and medieval times had borne the trade between East and West. Near the time when the Turkish control became complete, a new way was discovered, passing around Africa; and within a few years the larger part of the through trade between Europe and Asia had deserted the Levantine routes and begun to follow that round the Cape of Good Hope. The causes of this diversion of trade have not been fully agreed upon. No specific investigation of the subject appears to have been made. A glance through works which, being mainly concerned with other subjects, have alluded to the shifting of the routes of oriental trade about the year 1500, shows that two incompatible views are prevalent. One of these holds in general that the advance of the Ottoman power gradually blocked the ancient trade-routes and forced a series of attempts to discover new routes; after these attempts had succeeded, the Turks continued to obstruct the old routes and compelled the use of the new. The other view finds little or no connexion between the growth of the Turkish power and the causes of the great discoveries: a set of motives quite independent of the rise of the Turks led men like Henry of Portugal and Christopher Columbus to explore the unknown world; and when the new route to India had been established

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it was found to possess an essential superiority for trade, which gave it pre-eminence until in the nineteenth century the balance was again turned by the introduction of steam navigation and the opening of the Suez Canal. The evidence appears to be overwhelmingly in favour of the second of these views. In the present article, however, without arguing the question directly, it is proposed to survey the course of oriental trade from the close of the great Crusades until the eighteenth century, so as to show the influence of the Ottoman Turks as it emerged historically.

The medieval trade-routes between western Europe and eastern and southern Asia fall into two groups: the northern, which passed mainly by land, and the southern, which passed mainly by sea. The former communicated with central Asia, China, and India through the Black Sea and Asia Minor, the latter through Syria and Egypt. Each group had branches which entered Asia near Aleppo and diverged in the direction of Tabriz and Bagdad. On all routes there were what in America are compendiously termed 'long hauls' and 'short hauls'; that is to say, wares which travelled most of the way, as Western silver and coral and Eastern silk and spice, and wares which travelled only part of the way, as sugar, cotton, and Arabian gums. It was possible, also, for merchants who dealt in goods of the former class to travel the whole road or to go only part of it and sell or exchange their commodities, which would be carried on by other hands. For most goods the southern routes, especially that by the Red Sea, were cheaper, because they ran mostly by sea;[1] but this consideration was less important in the case of the costlier spices, especially as they were liable to suffer damage in the holds of ships. It was not so much, however, the question of expense as political and religious conditions which determined what routes would be preferred. If merchants are hindered by one route, said Marino Sanuto the Elder, they find another, like water, and they never cease seeking a way which will bring them more profit.[2]

At the beginning of the fourteenth century five routes were most in use: the land road through Tana from the mouth of the Don north of the Caspian Sea to China; the way through Trebizond to Tabriz and central Asia; the two roads from Lajazzo (Ayas) at the head of the Gulf of Alexandretta, one by Tabriz, the other by Bagdad and the Persian Gulf to India and beyond; and finally the route by the Nile, Kosseir, the Red

[1] W. Heyd, *Le Colonie commerciali degli Italiani in Oriente nel Medio Evo*, Venice, 1866–8, ii. 167.

[2] *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis* (in Bongars, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, vol. ii, Hanover, 1611), p. 23.

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Sea, and the Indian Ocean to southern and eastern Asia.[3] The north road was practicable as far as China for the century between 1240 and 1340, while the Mongol Empire was strong.[4] During this time foreign merchants, missionaries, and travellers were protected, and encouraged to traverse the vast Mongol territories freely.[5] These were still pagan in 1291, though the western divisions turned Moslem soon after that date. The routes which entered at Trebizond and Lajazzo nourished the small Christian states of Trebizond and Lesser Armenia, which served as vestibules to the Mongol lands.[6] Between them lay Asia Minor, the land of the Turk, broken at the time into ten small emirates, hostile in the interior to Christian strangers, but dealing freely at its ports with Western traders, and beginning to develop a commercial and piratical shipping.[7] Palestine and Egypt were under the Mameluke sultans, who permitted no foreign Christian to cross their dominions.[8] but who, as well as their subjects, derived great profit from a large trade between West and East. Christian cities, especially Venice, Genoa, and Barcelona, traded regularly at Alexandria.

The popes never forgave the Mamelukes for expelling Western Christians from the Holy Land,[9] and after repeated efforts they succeeded in the second quarter of the fourteenth century in reducing Christian commerce with Alexandria to small proportions. Hence the trade by the other routes increased, and the prices of comparatively bulky Eastern wares like pepper and ginger became higher in the West.[10] But the Mongol empire disintegrated rapidly, first into large states, then into a multitude of small ones which threatened anarchy. In consequence, from about the year 1340 the northern through route to China ceased to be practicable and the ways through Persia became difficult.[11] This was the first obstruction, or rather breaking up, of the trade-routes, and in it the Ottoman Turks, who then formed a small though vigorous principality, had no part. But since all the Levantine routes were now restricted in

[3] For the first three routes see Comte L. de Mas Latrie, *Privilège commercial accordé en 1320 à la république de Venise par un roi de Perse, etc.*, Bibl. de l'École des Chartes, xxxi (1870), 79–81. For the last three routes see Marino Sanuto, *loc. cit.*, pp. 3, 4, 22.

[4] W. Heyd, *Histoire du Commerce du Levant au Moyen Âge*, translated by Furcy Raynaud, Leipzig, 1885, ii. 156 ff., 215 ff. [5] *Ibid.*, ii. 72.

[6] *Ibid.*, ii. 72 ff., 92 ff.; G. Finlay, *Hist. of Greece*, ed. by H. F. Tozer, Oxford, 1878, iv. 352 ff.

[7] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, i. 534 ff., especially 537, 542, 545, 550.

[8] Marino Sanuto, p. 23; Heyd, *Colonie commerciali*, ii. 224; *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 58, 71, 438.

[9] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 23 ff.; J. Delaville Le Roulx, *La France en Orient au XIV^e Siècle*, Paris, 1885, pp. 13 ff.

[10] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 188. [11] *Ibid.*, ii. 44 ff., 128, 505.

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one way or another, the Venetians and Genoese appealed to the pope for assistance; and a system of licences to trade with Egypt was developed, which in time restored the commerce of the southern route to its old prosperity. Subject to temporary fluctuations, spices became comparatively cheap, and the average price changed little, except for a slight fall, before 1520.[12]

In 1356 the Ottoman Turks established themselves on both sides of the Dardanelles, and, though they had little shipping, they were able to exercise some influence on the fraction of oriental trade which still passed through the Black Sea. They also gradually incorporated the other Turkish principalities in Asia Minor, and with them took over their trade agreements with Genoa and Venice and their rights to tribute from certain of the Aegean Islands.[13] Meanwhile in 1375 the Mamelukes absorbed Lesser Armenia (the ancient Cilicia), and thus brought into their hands the outlets of the three southern routes, which they held unmolested for one hundred and forty years. But frequent internal troubles in Persia disturbed the commerce which passed through Syria, and a violent alteration of trade-routes was accomplished by Timur,[14] who plundered Tana and seems to have checked the through trade from the East to the ports north of the Black Sea. He had definite commercial aims and made Samarkand a centre for caravans from China, India, Persia, and the West;[15] but he accomplished no such permanent political or economic unification of his dominions as had the first Mongol emperors. At his death in 1405 Persia fell into worse anarchy than ever, and the northern routes of the oriental

[12] According to J. E. Thorold Rogers, *History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, iii. 518–43; iv. 680–91, Oxford, 1882, the average price of pepper in England by decades from 1259 to 1580 was as follows, in shillings per dozen pounds, pence being neglected: for the thirteenth century, beginning with the seventh decade, 11, 12, 10, 16; for the fourteenth century, 12, 11, 15, 15, 19, 25, 17, 18, 11, 12; for the fifteenth century, 12, 32, 16, 13, 9, 13, 14, 14, 17, 17; for the sixteenth century, 16, 16, 23, 23, 20, 32, 44, 34. The Vicomte G. d'Avenel, *Histoire économique de la Propriété, des Salaires, des Denrées, et de tous les Prix en général, 1200–1800*, 5 vols., Paris, 1894–1912, iv. 482–6, 502–6, 598, gives the following prices for pepper in France by periods of twenty-five years from 1300 to 1600, in francs per kilogram; for the fourteenth century, 5.50, 12, 8, 19; for the fifteenth century, 5, 3, 4.70, 4; for the sixteenth century, 5, 8, 7.50, 12. Both series give only approximate results, since they rest upon a comparatively small number of data more or less accidentally preserved. The variations depend not only upon circumstances in the Levant, but also upon conditions in the lands of production and the lands of consumption and along the entire intervening route. It will be seen that the average for the first two decades of the sixteenth century was a little below that for the previous two centuries. Lowest of all were the prices in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. It may be possible to discern here the influence of Jacques Cœur, in establishing a well-organized direct trade between the Levant and France.

[13] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 259, 262, 269. [14] *Ibid.*, ii. 266 ff., 377.

[15] *Ibid.*, ii. 505; *Narrative of the Embassy of R. G. de Clavijo to the Court of Timour*, Hakluyt Society, 1859, pp. 89, 93, 165 ff.

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trade became as nearly completely blocked as they ever were.[16] The Turks took no part in this process, though they suffered from it, both in Timur's time and afterwards.

Venice had by now beaten Genoa decisively, and there ensued a century of comparative stability in the oriental trade. Pearls, silk, pepper, ginger, nutmegs, mace, cinnamon, and cloves were steadily exchanged in Syria and Egypt against gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, coral, and the like.[17] The Mameluke sultan and his subjects took toll of all, and Venice did most of the carrying and gained most of the profit. While the value of commodities was multiplied many times in the 'long hauls', it does not seem to be the case that Egypt and Venice took more than due advantage of the situation.[18] Supply and demand have their effect even upon monopoly prices.

By about 1450, when the Turks had recovered most of their losses at the hands of Timur, trade relations were regularly conducted by caravan between Brusa, the first Ottoman capital, and Aleppo and Tabriz.[19] Not a few oriental wares followed these routes, and there is some evidence that Western merchants purchased spices at Brusa.[20] The capture of Constantinople by Mohammed II in 1453 gave him complete control of the Straits and a commanding position towards Genoa and Venice. In the readjustment which followed, the political rights of these cities at Constantinople were somewhat curtailed, but their trading privileges were renewed with little change.[21]

The commercial policy of the Turks, now well established, was not at all one of hostility to trade. They sought indeed to exclude foreigners from their internal commerce, as well as from the conduct of through trade while crossing their lands.[22] But such a desire cannot rightly be counted against them; all states

[16] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 427; F. E. de La Primaudaie, *Histoire du Commerce de la Mer Noire*, Paris, 1848, p. 158.

[17] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 427, 440, 500 ff. For a list of the wares exchanged in the oriental trade, see G. Berchet, *Del Commercio dei Veneti nell' Asia*, Venice, 1869, pp. 13–15.

[18] Heyd, *Colonie commerciali*, ii. 272, note 1, quotes Peschel for the statement that a quintal of ginger which cost at Calicut 4 cruzados sold at Alexandria for 11 and at Venice for 16. But G. Priuli (in R. Fulin's *Diarii e Diaristi Venetiani*, Venice, 1881, p. 160) says that one ducat at Calicut mounted to from 60 to 100 ducats in Europe. The latter statement appears to be exaggerated, since in England, at the farthest extremity of Europe, pepper could fall as low as 9*d.* the pound (see note 12). If Priuli be correct, the value of pepper at Calicut in his time was a farthing or less per pound, or a sou per kilogram.

[19] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 352. Bertrandon de la Brocquière (Wright's *Early Travels in Palestine*, London, 1848, pp. 283 ff.) made the journey by caravan from Aleppo to Brusa.

[20] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 349. [21] *Ibid.*, pp. 308 ff., 316 ff.

[22] They continued the exclusive policy of the Mamelukes in regard to the trade through Egypt and the Red Sea: Sieur J. Savary, *Le Parfait Négociant*, Geneva, 1752, p. 837.

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endeavour to protect the pockets of their subjects. In conquering new regions the Turks regularly renewed the old commercial treaties with foreign powers, and usually observed them faithfully.[23] It is true that with them commerce was secondary, and conquest stood first. But they wished to encourage trade for the sake of revenue.[24] They fought with Genoa and Venice, not because these were trading powers, but because they owned lands, cities, and exceptional rights within the area of Turkish political influence. With Florence, Ancona, and other commercial cities which had no lands in the Levant and strove for none relations were uniformly good.[25] The Turks even confirmed or granted privileges of trade in their ports beyond what were allowed in the West, and some of their rules as regards duties were more liberal than elsewhere.[26] But no doubt generous provisions were not infrequently frustrated in particular cases by grasping officials, who, by the way, were usually renegade Christians.[27]

After his conquest of Trebizond Mohammed II came into conflict with Venice in 1464 and took some of her Levantine territory. War followed for nine years, in the course of which a new route of Eastern trade was temporarily opened.[28] The Venetians formed an alliance, both military and commercial, with the Turkoman Uzun Hassan, and some regions of southern Asia Minor, which had not been recovered by the Ottoman Turks since the time of Timur, furnished an opening through which spices could pass for a short time to Satalia, the present Adalia. Mohammed, however, annexed the southern regions, inflicted a severe defeat upon Uzun Hassan, and forced the Venetians to a favourable peace. Soon after this he took the Genoese possession of Kaffa in the Crimea, subjugated the Tartars of that neighbourhood, and obtained complete control of the Black Sea. The trade to the East through that sea was already practically gone. Some Genoese remained in Kaffa, and the Venetians obtained sailing and trading rights

[23] J. W. Zinkeisen, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches in Europa*, Gotha, 1840–63, ii. 576, 577, and G. Berchet, *Del Commercio dei Veneti nell' Asia*, Venice, 1869, p. 18, mention the renewal of the old Mameluke treaties with Venice after the Turkish conquest of Egypt in 1517. See references to Heyd in notes 13 and 21 above.

[24] Zinkeisen, *loc. cit.*, in a note quotes Paruta to the effect that in 1517 Selim 'desiderava l'amicitia de' Venetiani e che nel principio del nuovo imperio procurava d'accrescere i traffichi in quella provincia per particolare utile e commodo di quei sudditi e per interesse dell' entrate publiche'.

[25] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 337, 349.

[26] Savary, pp. 770, 797, says that the Turks never required two payments of duties on merchandise brought to one province and transported to another, 'comme il se pratique en beaucoup d'autres états de l'Europe,' and that the penalty for false declarations of weight was not confiscation but correction.

[27] See my *Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Sulciman the Magnificent*, pp. 39 ff.

[28] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 326 ff.

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which were continued formally for sixty years.[29] But for about three centuries the Black Sea was used by hardly any other ships than those of the sultan's subjects. A considerable trade upon it supplied Constantinople with food and various raw materials, some of which were exported to the West.[30] The conquests of Mohammed II undoubtedly contributed in some degree to the obstruction of the northern routes, but their importance, both in time and extent, was secondary. What measure of reduction they accomplished in the Levant trade at the north served to increase the trade along the southern routes,[31] and we have seen that these conquests accomplished no discernible permanent elevation of prices in the West.[32]

In the war of Bayezid II with the sultan of Egypt, during the years 1485 to 1491, caused by the latter's giving asylum to the former's brother, Prince Jem, the Turkish troops were thoroughly defeated. The course of oriental trade through Syria and Egypt was not in the least molested by the Turks before the year 1516. Along the northern routes, whose outlets were in their hands, they made no effort to stop the flow of wares. In times of peace and order in Persia many caravans passed east and west, exchanging wares from the Aegean Sea even to the far interior of Asia. There continued also a regular movement north and south to Aleppo, and thence to Bagdad and Mecca and the East. If the Turks had hindered oriental trade, they had checked it but slightly. During their frequent wars commerce was more or less disturbed; but the wars usually ended in an increase of territory which furnished a wider commercial opportunity.

Through Egypt and Syria, although disputes about the succession to the Mameluke throne, occasional visitations of the plague,

[29] G. B. Depping, *Histoire du Commerce entre l'Europe et le Levant depuis les Croisades*, 1832, ii. 227, 228; P. H. Mischef, *La Mer Noire*, p. 17. Privileges to navigate in the Black Sea were regularly granted to Venice by the Porte in treaties before that of 1540.

[30] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 351; Savary, pp. 822, 827.

[31] Heyd, *Colonie commerciali*, i. 479.

[32] See the price averages, above, p. 580, note 12. The absence of marked influence upon prices exerted by the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks deserves special attention, since that conquest has been imagined to have closed the routes of the Levant to such an extent as to force the western Europeans to seek new routes. If this had been the case the price of spices must have shown a marked increase between 1453 and 1498, which it did not do. Nor was it the agencies engaged in the Mediterranean trade which sought the new routes, but Atlantic powers in no relation with the Turks. It is not even certain that the desire to profit from a more direct spice trade emerged in the consciousness of western Europeans before 1490 (see H. Vignaud, *Histoire critique de la Grande Entreprise de Christophe Colomb*, Paris, 1911, i. 213). The entire hypothesis seems to be a legend of recent date, developed out of the catastrophic theory which made the fall of Constantinople an event of primary importance in the history of mankind. The great discoveries had their origin in a separate chain of causes, into which the influence of the Moslems of Spain, North Africa, and the Mameluke empire entered, but not that of the Ottoman Turks.

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and quarrels between natives and Europeans caused the volume of trade to fluctuate, the old flow of oriental wares was maintained unbroken down to 1502.[33] That year marks a new epoch. The galleys of Venice found very few spices at Alexandria and Beirut; in 1504 they found none at all.[34] The southern trade-routes of the Levant had been emptied by the purchases of the Portuguese in India. From that year an average of twelve or more ships left Lisbon annually for the East,[35] and from 1507 the Portuguese sent fleets to blockade the mouths of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.[36] It was a deliberate attempt to stop permanently the passage of wares along the old southern routes of oriental trade, made not by Turks but by western Europeans, but it was not entirely successful. The Venetian galleys which continued to sail to the Levant usually found some spices to be bought. But the old certainty was gone, and prices which were low at Lisbon were high at Beirut and Alexandria.[37] The total quantity of spices which came by the old routes from the East to Europe was greatly reduced. Venice sent fewer ships to the Levant and deemed it imprudent to build new galleys for the Eastern trade.[38] This was the situation when Selim I overthrew the Mameluke sultans in 1516 and 1517. Instead of blocking the southern routes further, he adopted the policy which the Mamelukes had left him. He renewed the old treaties with Venice and the West, and took over the intention of crushing the Portuguese naval power in the Indian Ocean by a fleet sent down the Red Sea.[39]

After 1502, then, the carrying of spices from India to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf was interfered with by the Portuguese. Nevertheless, besides the diminished amount of spices which was taken by the Venetians and others from Aleppo and Alexandria for European consumption, goods of the same class required in Arabia, Persia, Turkey, and North Africa continued to travel by the old routes. In fact this trade appears never to have ceased.[40] The Turkish conquest of Egypt, far from creating

[33] R. Fulin, *Diarii e Diaristi Veneziani*, Venice, 1881, pp. 155 ff. (Dal Diario di Girolamo Priuli, 1494–1512); Marino Sanuto, *Diarii, 1496–1533*, Venice, 1879–1903; *passim*.

[34] Fulin, pp. 165, 173, 175.

[35] Faria E. Souza, as epitomized by J. Briggs in his *History of the Rise of the Mohamedan Power in India*, London, 1829, iv. 501 ff. Of 114 ships sent in the first ten years 55 returned; Heyd, *Colonie commerciali*, ii. 277.

[36] Albuquerque took Ormuz in 1507, and made an attempt on Aden in 1513. Lorenzo Almeida was killed while fighting the Mameluke fleet in 1508, and his father destroyed the Egyptian fleet in 1509. Thus began a long struggle, in which the Portuguese tried to stifle the direct trade between India and the Levant. See, for a general statement, Heyd, *Colonie commerciali*, ii. 273.

[37] Fulin, pp. 160, 164 ff.

[38] Marino Sanuto, *op. cit.*, xxiv. 22–36.

[39] See above, note 23.

[40] A. Vandal, in his *Voyages du Marquis de Nointel* (*1670–80*), Paris, 1900, p. 12, says: 'La Mer Rouge se ferma totalement vers 1630 et l'Égypte devint une impasse.'

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a revolution in the Levant trade, caused only a temporary disturbance of it, not unlike that caused previously by the death of one Mameluke sultan and the accession of another.[41] The real revolution was already accomplished. The beginning of the economic decay of the Levant and of the decline of Venice and the Mediterranean trading cities dates, not from the Turkish conquest of Egypt in 1517, but, if its causes be not traced even earlier, from the doubling of the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese in 1498.

In 1528 Francis I opened negotiations with Suleiman, and French ships began to compete with those of Venice and Barcelona

P. Masson, *Histoire du Commerce français dans le Levant au XVII^e Siècle*, Paris, 1896, pp. i, 386 and 411, refers to the continuance of this trade (as late as 1670), but he finds no mention in the records at Marseilles of the importation of spices from Aleppo and Cairo after 1700. Nevertheless a number of pieces of evidence can be adduced to show that the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf were far from being closed, and that if Indian wares rarely passed through to Europe, this was only because it was not profitable to purchase them at Cairo and the Syrian entrepôts and ship them westward in competition with the Cape route. See, for example, Pierre Belon du Mans, *Observations*, 1555, pp. 121a, 158b; *Travels of P. Teixeira* (translated), London, 1852 (Hakluyt Society), pp. 118 ff. *et passim* (the Venetians bought at Aleppo in 1605, among other wares, cinnamon, cloves, nutmegs, and mace); J. de Thévenot (translated), *Travels into the Levant*, London, 1686, part i, pp. 152 ff., part ii, pp. 72 ff. F. Vansleb (translated), *The Present State of Egypt*, London, 1678, pp. 118–27, gives a long list of commodities exchanged between Europe and Egypt, with their prices, and mentions all the ordinary spices as purchasable by Europeans in Egypt in 1673. Hasselquist, writing on the Levant about 1749, describes the caravan trade which was bringing Indian stuffs and spices from Mecca to Egypt, North Africa, and Syria (i. 124 ff.), and the Indian trade by the Red Sea and Persian Gulf into Turkey (ii. 101, 124). Baron de Tott, in his *Mémoires*, Amsterdam, 1784–5, part iv, pp. 54 ff., found Cairo a great entrepôt between East and West: 'le choc des ballots marqués à Madras & à Marseille semble fixer un centre à l'univers.' C. T. Volney in his *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte*, published 1783–5 (i. 189 ff., ii. 138 ff.), describes the same trade in some detail. G. A. Olivier in his *Voyage dans l'Empire Othoman, l'Égypte, et la Perse*, Paris, an XII, iii. 327 ff., iv. 273 ff., finds the same double trade active and flourishing, and he states that after 1498 all the products of the Orient for the use of the Moslems continued to come through Bagdad and Egypt (iv. 430).

[41] Heyd merely states that no gain accrued to the trade of Syria and Egypt from the Turkish conquest (*Commerce du Levant*, ii. 546). Thorold Rogers (*op. cit.*, iv. 653–7) affirms that before the Portuguese discoveries the Turks 'appear to have blocked every passage but one', and that 'their conquest of Egypt proceeded to block the only remaining road'. It has been shown that they 'blocked' no roads, that *two* (through Syria and Egypt) were out of their power until 1516 and 1517, and that they were actually desirous of keeping these roads open. Rogers finds confirmation of his view in the rise of the prices of oriental wares after 1520. At first sight he might seem justified. By twenty-year periods the price of a dozen pounds of pepper in England in the sixteenth century was 16, 23, 26, and 39 shillings. But the price of a quarter of wheat, by his own figures, was 6, 7½, 13, and 15 shillings for the same periods. The fact is that pepper and other oriental wares rose with the general rise of prices in the sixteenth century, almost certainly caused by the addition to the European stock of gold and silver from the Americas. The evidence of price cannot be said to indicate disturbance from the Turkish conquest of Egypt; indeed it shows singularly little from the doubling of the Cape, which might be presumed to have caused a noticeable fall in prices.

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for spices at Alexandria.[42] The 10 per cent. duty which had been exacted by the Mamelukes was presently reduced to 5, and later to 3 per cent.[43] While the Turks despised the Venetians, as men who would endure indignities rather than lose money, they respected the French, and these rapidly gained on the Venetians and in time surpassed them in amount of trade.[44]

In the thirties of the sixteenth century Suleiman undertook two great projects which were evidently designed to open and secure the southern trade-routes.[45] He captured Bagdad and the lands at the head of the Persian Gulf, and he sent a fleet from Suez for an unsuccessful attempt to expel the Portuguese from Diu in Gujarat. Thirty years later Turkish power was extended on the east of the Red Sea to Aden, and another expedition was sent out, which likewise failed to dislodge the Portuguese from Diu. An active trade continued through Alexandria and Aleppo; for instance, about the year 1550 most of the rhubarb used in Europe came through the latter city.[46] It appears that in the last quarter of the century, when Portugal passed into the hands of Philip II of Spain, during an era of high prices, much of the prosperity of the old southern routes returned, and there was a heavy traffic in spices through the Turkish dominions.[47] But the more energetic Dutch and English found their way also round the Cape, and rapidly drew the Western traffic in spices again into that channel. They also opened commercial relations with the Levant, which rivalled their trade with the East. In the latter part of the seventeenth century they began to bring pepper and spices even round Africa to the ports of the Levant.[48] By this time the Venetian trade had fallen greatly,[49] but the French maintained a place of commercial supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean. In the eighteenth century few wares came through from East to West, though silver passed in no small quantities in the opposite direction. The coins of Spain, Germany, and Holland helped to convey to western Europe the products of Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, and Persia; and the same coins served again to bring to Turkey and Persia the spices, silks, and precious stones of the East.[50] 'Short haul' goods continued

[42] For light on the beginnings of French trade at this time see Marino Sanuto, lvii. 267, 436, 503; lviii. col. 86, &c.

[43] Depping, ii. 247.

[44] Masson, pp. xii ff.

[45] Heyd, in his *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 546, says that Suleiman purposed to centre the spice trade of the world at Constantinople.

[46] Belon du Mans, p. 158 b.

[47] Masson, p. xvi.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 374, shows that the English took pepper and spices to Alexandretta in 1681. See also pp. 412, 505.

[49] Berchet, pp. 21, 25, explains the causes of this decline.

[50] For this drainage of the precious metals eastward see Masson, pp. xxxii, 371, 374, 487; Savary, *op. cit.*, p. 835; Vansleb, *op. cit.*, pp. 110, 127, 128; Thévenot, *op. cit.*, ii. 77, 156. Thévenot says (p. 77), 'it may be said of Persia, that it is a Kervan-

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to move freely and in large quantities along most of the old routes.[51]

There is evidence to indicate that no one of the shorter routes, had there been no Turks nor any other nation on their lines to take toll upon wares, could have competed for the trade of southern Asia with western Europe against the Cape route. The land transit alone by the Persian Gulf route seems to have cost more than the sea freight from India to Europe.[52] A calculation made about the year 1800 shows that a shipment from India to France by way of the Red Sea would probably make a profit of 4 per cent., whereas the same consignment if sent round the Cape would earn from 36 to 48 per cent.; if a Christian power were in possession of the Red Sea and Egypt the gain by that route would be not more than 10 per cent.[53] The Red Sea is so straight and narrow, and so strewn with rocks and shallows, that sailing-vessels have to wait for favourable winds and waste much time. The Indiamen were not well adapted to this sea, so that transhipment was customary at Aden, Mocha, or Jedda. There was always a transit by land, of some ninety miles at the shortest (from Suez to Cairo), then a passage by small vessel on the Nile, and another transhipment at Alexandria. On the other hand the time necessary for a voyage between India and Europe averaged not much less by the Cape route than by the Red Sea.[54] Until the invention of the steamship, which could run straight through the Red Sea without reference to the winds, and the excavation of the Suez Canal, which eliminated the land transit, the Cape route seems to have been cheaper than all others for long distance wares.[55]

It appears, then, that in the first of the two views set forth at the beginning of this article, the relation of the Turks to the

serai that serves for passage to the money that goes out of Europe and Turkey to the Indies; and to the Stuffs and Spices that come from the Indies, into Turkey and Europe, whereof it makes some small profit in the passage.' See also Olivier, iv. 434, and P. Blancard, *Manuel du Commerce des Indes*, Paris, 1806, pp. 70, 106.

[51] In fact, it may be said that the great discoveries displaced approximately only about one-third of the traffic along the old routes through the Levant. Except for the precious metals, the Cape route finally took practically all of the through exchanges between southern and eastern Asia and western Europe. But the 'short haul' trade between western Europe and the Moslem lands and between the Moslem lands and India nearly all passed as before. Masson says, p. ii, note 1, that about 1682 the Levant trade of England and Holland was almost equally important with their East Indian trade, while that of France was her most extensive foreign trade. For the new trade in Arabian coffee, see *ibid.*, 410; Blancard, p. 82 (the coffee that was carried round Africa was damaged on the long voyage); Olivier, iii. 326. Silks and other Persian products were brought across Turkey by caravan to Mediterranean ports; Berchet, 15; Masson, *op. cit.*, and Savary, *passim*; Olivier, v. 320.

[52] Masson, p. 543.

[53] Blancard, pp. 520 ff.

[54] Blancard, pp. 525, 526, estimates 17½ months for the round trip via Suez and 20 months via the Cape.

[55] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, ii. 552.

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change of the trade-routes has been misconceived. They were not active agents in deliberately obstructing the routes. They did not by their notorious indifference and conservatism greatly, if at all on the whole, increase the difficulties of the oriental traffic. Nor did they make the discovery of new routes imperative. On the contrary, they lost by the discovery of a new and superior route. Had there been no way around Africa the whole story of the Levant since 1500 might have been very different. In the first place, the Mameluke sultans might have found in their uninterrupted trade sufficient financial support to enable them to resist successfully the attack of the Turks in 1516. But if the Turks had conquered Egypt while the full stream of oriental trade still ran through it, they must either have been deprived far sooner than was actually the case of the control of these routes, or they would have had to accommodate themselves to the great and increasing trade through their dominions. In the latter case they might have been forced into adopting modern ways, and into adding to their wonderful capacity for territorial unification a parallel scheme of organizing their trade. The decay of the lands of the Levant (neglecting the hypothesis of climatic change) might have been arrested and reversed. But there was a Cape route, and for three centuries and a half it took the bulk of the oriental trade. Selim I and Suleiman, the greatest of Ottoman conquerors, were powerless in their efforts to bring back the lucrative flow of Eastern wares. The shifting of the trade-routes was done, not by the Turks, but in their despite and to their disadvantage. The desolation of Egypt and Syria, the decline of the Italian cities, perhaps the very decay of the Ottoman empire itself, are due, not to them, but to the great discoveries, in which, positively or negatively, they had no discernible part.

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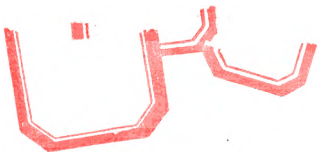

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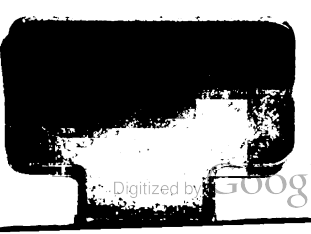

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